

The Library Assistant:

The Official Organ of the Library Assistants' Association.

No. 107.

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Published Monthly

ANNOUNCEMENTS.

NOVEMBER MEETING.

The first ordinary meeting of the Session will be held at the **Bromley Library, Brunswick Road, Poplar, E.**, by kind invitation of Harry Rowlatt, Esq., Chief Librarian, on **Wednesday evening, November 14th, at 7.30 o'clock.**

Mr. Rowlatt will take the chair, and the undermentioned papers will be read and discussed:—

7.30 Junior paper: Henry A. Twort, Croydon Central Lending Library. "Collections of Illustrations in Public Libraries."

Synopsis: Illustrations as an aid to study; their use in Libraries; method of storing; classification; loan and reference use; indexing; illustrations in books.

8.15 p.m. Senior papers: (1) W. Benson Thorne, District Librarian, Bromley, E. "Aids to Readers: Printed and Mechanical."

Synopsis: A consideration of the question—"Are aids necessary?" what is an aid? the variety of individuals to be catered for, and how their needs may best be met: the recognised bibliographical aids; other aids; catalogues, reading lists, bulletins, bibliographical articles, etc.; the lending and reference departments and their different requirements in the matter of aids; what can be done for the fiction reader? aids and their relation to popular progress.

(2) W. R. B. Prideaux, B.A., The Library, Royal College of Physicians. "Personal Relations between Staff and Readers."

Synopsis: Importance of the subject: different kinds of readers and their wants; the difficulties of the situation: what not to do.

Light refreshments will be served after the meeting.

The following hints as to how to reach the place of meeting may be useful. We recommend the first route:—

From Broad Street (N.L.R.) to South Bromley. Poplar train from No. 2 platform every 15 minutes. Fare, 5d. return. South Bromley Station is 5 minutes' walk from the Library.

District Railway to Bromley, by East Ham train. Ten minutes' walk to Library.

Motor 'Bus from Putney to Bow Bridge, via the Strand and Bank. From Bow Bridge the Library is 15 minutes' walk.

ANNUAL DINNER.

The ninth Annual Dinner of the L.A.A. promises to be a huge success. As previously announced this function will take place at **Anderton's Hotel, Fleet Street, E.C.**, on **Wednesday, November 7th, at 7 for 7.30 o'clock.** Mr. W. Benson Thorne (Chairman of the Association) will preside. Applications for tickets (price, 3s. 6d. each) should be made to Mr. W. Geo. Chambers, Public Library, Plumstead, not later than first post on the 5th inst. An excellent musical programme has been arranged, and a thoroughly enjoyable evening is assured. Ladies are specially invited, and old members and friends will be heartily welcome.

Note.—A vegetarian dinner, at the same price, will be provided for those who desire it, and who notify Mr. Chambers not later than Nov. 6th.

INAUGURAL MEETING.

The opening meeting of the Twelfth Session took place at the London School of Economics on Wednesday evening, October 10th, when the inaugural address was delivered by Edmund Gosse, Esq., LL.D., Librarian of the House of Lords. There was an exceptionally large attendance, a fact which is, perhaps, not surprising considering the importance of the occasion and the attractiveness of the proceedings. The chair was taken by E. Wyndham Hulme, Esq., Librarian of the Patent Office Library, and among an audience which numbered between 130 and 140 persons were noticed Messrs. Borrajo (Guildhall), Kettle (Guildhall), Plant (Shoreditch), Baker (Woolwich), Martin (Hammersmith), Jast (Croydon), H. D. Roberts (Brighton), Hopwood (Patent Office Library), Bond (St. Pancras), McKillop (London School of Economics), and Palmer (National Art Library, South Kensington). The gratifying feature of the meeting, however, was the splendid attendance of assistants.

The Chairman's Address.

The Chairman said that when first casting round for a theme upon which to base his remarks it occurred to him that as he was just completing his twenty-fifth year of library work he might indulge in a few personal reminiscences, but he soon found that the publication of reflections of this sort was best left to the discretion of one's literary executor, as the humour of a situation or point of an anecdote was sometimes obtained at the expense of the memory of one's immediate predecessor. He had, therefore, determined on a less personal theme, viz.: the part played by the Library Association in the development of the library movement. He supposed there was no one present who did not realise that the great material advance in the library movement—he referred to the numbers of buildings which were springing up with mushroom growth all over the country—was due almost entirely to the unparalleled generosity of Mr. Carnegie. That gentleman was probably sated with the homage which the British public and the British press were always ready to pay to wealth and to the man who was consistent in his application of it, so that he proposed to mingle a little candid criticism in his tribute, and to claim for the Library Association its due share of recognition for the work which had been done in recent years. The machinery and plant of administration, costly though they were, were merely the means of transmitting and converting into useful work the brain power behind them. The mechanism without the motive power was inoperative; moreover the mechanism might be unsuited to the class of motive power available. In either case there was a danger in applying a hard-and-fast rule. How, then, had Mr. Carnegie's bequests operated? Take the case of the municipalities first. What would have been the effect of Mr. Carnegie's gifts if the Library Association had not by its annual meetings consistently pressed upon the local authorities its ideals of library administration—of the true function of the library in its relation to adults and children—as a link in the system of national education, and of the status and qualifications of the librarian and staff? He would answer the query by pointing to the different results obtained in the municipalities *with which they were all in touch* and in the rural districts *which were beyond their control*, though they shared in Mr. Carnegie's favours. The municipalities had met us fairly; they had worked out the problems of administration with us in Conference; they understood our aims and as a rule had accepted our conclusions. For instance, it was now recognised in all the large industrial centres that librarianship was a profession, and that the professional advice of a librarian was requisite from the date of the adoption of the Acts. Vacancies on the library staff were filled with a single eye to the professional qualifications of candidates, while in the London area there was a keen and honourable rivalry between the various units to

secure librarians of repute as the recognised means of securing the most efficient library service. But, said Mr. Hulme, when we turn to the rural districts, where Mr. Carnegie's generosity goes on without our direction, there is a different tale to tell. Our information, he admitted, was far from complete, but he could give a fairly typical case as illustration. The local architect is commissioned to put up a building, and the plan of administration is settled afterwards. A two-storey building goes up where a one-storey building would have sufficed, and then it is found that there is not enough money for the fittings, which have to be of the cheapest quality. A few expensive reference books are bought to give a tone to the place; these are hidden away for security in a sequestered part of the building. The Committee has decided that a high standard of fiction is to be maintained, but the first cheap lot offered them proves too great a temptation. Besides, it is now approaching opening day; the shelves are empty and the balance at the bank is low. Apprehension succeeds to enthusiasm. The Committee is tiring of its labours and not quite sure that after all they have done the right thing. But they are all unanimous on one point, and that is that the ratepayers shall not learn the truth as to how their money has been frittered away, so they cover up their track by appointing a local candidate, for the alleged reason that the poor devil has hitherto been unfortunate in life, but also because he can always be got rid of if he shows any tendency to exercise an independent judgment. This misdirected extension of the library movement was causing librarians some anxiety. It was clear that the rural authorities required a helping hand in starting their library systems on an economical basis. To this end the Council of the Library Association had in preparation a series of suggestions which would take the form of a pamphlet which would be circulated broadcast in districts where the adoption of the Acts was reported. If that failed of success they must try other methods. This dumping of derelict bookshelters in the rural districts could not be allowed to go on without protest. The machinery was in advance of, and unsuited to, the available motive power, and Mr. Carnegie would do well when he next addressed a library audience to state his own views on the subject. It was, for instance, quite possible that in the rural districts what was wanted was not library buildings but an organised system of book distribution, which would require an entirely different type of machinery and structure. If so, Mr. Carnegie's gifts were in opposition to the true trend of the library movement. One more word as to the claims of the Library Association to public recognition. He referred to the work of the Education Committee which, for the last ten years, had been so closely associated with the name of Mr. Roberts. There was no branch of the Association's work which did it greater credit than the long record of unpaid hours of labour which had been devoted by its secretary, lecturers and examiners towards ensuring the success of its educational system. In other professions these posts carried not only considerable emoluments, but also indirect advantage. With them, the work had been practically gratuitous. There was one other point he should like to impress upon them in this connection. In the early years of a profession such as theirs, a large and apparently disproportionate amount of time and energy would have to be devoted to the technical side of a librarian's training, but ultimately these methods would be codified and simplified, and then more attention would be paid to the standard of a candidate's liberal education. Before many more years had elapsed it was almost a certainty that the preliminary examinations would be restored, and a competent knowledge of history, literature and language would be exacted before the technical training was open to them. The moral, said Mr. Hulme, was obvious: don't waste time, but come in before the standards are raised against you. (Loud applause.)

The Chairman then called upon Mr. Gosse to address the meeting.

Mr. Gosse's Address.

Mr. Gosse, in congratulating librarians on the excellent work they are doing in the civilisation of all classes of society, wondered whether they recollected that, according to the laws of astrology, librarians and those who disseminate book-knowledge enjoy the special protection of the planet Mercury, which, of all the heavenly bodies, is the most benign to literature and to books. He might be permitted to invoke the memory of that agreeable and volatile deity as an argument against too exclusively technical and didactic a study of the subject which occupied their thoughts and their activities so abundantly. He asked himself, as he respectfully studied the programmes of successive seasons of the association, whether the note of gravity was not too uniformly struck. It was all so technical, so mechanical. If it had been his privilege to attend the meetings of last year, he should know something at least of such important themes as "the fair time sheet" and the "overdue," and have some conception of the importance of "open access" and of "the technique of annotation." These are professional subjects, to be treated, no doubt, with something of the professional obscurity and solemnity. So doctors talk, and lawyers, and motor-car experts, when they are alone together, and such specialised discussion is wholesome and necessary. He possessed, however, none of the special technical knowledge requisite for this kind of exposition, and all he could hope to give them in return for the courtesy of their invitation, would be a few more general suggestions. He observed, and he was glad to observe, that a care for the dignity of books was a point which seemed to occupy them greatly. In this matter he would venture to give them a word of encouragement. Their labour, which in the presence of dirt, rents, and dogs' ears, might sometimes seem to them hopeless, was, in reality, not in vain. We have a romantic idea that in the beautiful Middle Ages the respect for books, which were so rare and costly, was religious. As a matter of fact there appears to have been a great deal of human nature about, even in the Middle Ages. The rules for the preservation of books at Oxford, when that University began to possess what we may consider lending, or, at least, consulting libraries, were in principle much like our own, only more severe as betokening a still more criminous class of reader. Medieval librarians took a solemn oath that they would guard the books under their care from every species of injury or defilement. That this was not an empty form of words, Mr. Gosse proceeded to prove by quotations from writers of the 14th century, showing that even then books, precious as they were, were apt to be treated with the most cynical disrespect. The medieval student had often dirty hands, and his thumbs left stains on the broad white margins of the leaves, the *lilia librorum*, which ought to have been so spotless. They had no forks in those days, so that men ate with their fingers, and it was one of the duties of a librarian to see that students not only washed their hands before reading, but did not commit the infamy of eating fruit and cheese over the book itself. We saw that the same difficulties which assail librarians to-day assailed them, in ten-fold force, 600 years ago. No doubt every century raises the moral sense of society in these matters. A hundred years ago the poet Wordsworth, one of the most dignified of men, was accustomed to receive at Grasmere the new books from London while he was breakfasting. He breakfasted off buttered toast, and it is recorded that, in his impatience, he used to open the leaves with his buttery knife. It is impossible for us to imagine the present Poet Laureate doing that. Whatever advance we may have made in verse-writing, our improvement in the moral care of books is obvious. The question of the respect to be shown to books naturally leads us to consider that of their preservation. The late Sir Leslie Stephen was much troubled, as any one may well be, about the enormous multiplication of books, and he formed an ingenious plan for their automatic disappearance. Unless people were so much

interested in a book as to reprint it, it was to disappear, crumble into dust, and be definitely lost. When this scheme was suggested it was received with a smile, but the enormous accretion of unnecessary literature made the difficulty every year a more serious one. There was no doubt at all that the practices of clearance and destruction would force themselves upon us as absolutely inevitable, and something would have to be done in every library which would resemble the scene which Mr. Wells describes in his latest millennium, where thousands of books are brought out on Beltane Eve to be burned. Some relief might possibly be given by the increased formation of specialised libraries confined to one class of interest. There was one subject which he saw had often been made the subject of their discussions, and that was the taste of readers and how it was to be stimulated and guided. The libraries over which they presided were crowded with books, and not all of these were good. Some of them were very bad, not, that is to say, immoral, for the immoral book is hardly a danger to-day, but false, dull, sentimental, and claptrap. The temptation to adopt a magisterial attitude was one which, however, had to be avoided. Stringent rules will not answer, and people cannot be forced to read good books, however much we may deplore that they read bad ones. The individuality of the reader must be respected, even if it clashed with our preconceived opinions. But, while he did not approve of any direct opposition to manifestations of bad taste, he thought that it was a great mistake, as he was afraid some librarians had done, to pander to it. In adding books to a library, for instance, it was highly important not to consult too slavishly the possible tastes of the majority. He was inclined to hold that the public for whom librarians should be sensitive and active was that of the few rather than the many. In the matter of book-reading, as in so many other matters, majorities are largely indifferent, while minorities take the trouble to know what they want. It was a dangerous heresy in book-craft to try to flatter the reader too much, with a view to nursing his taste; the result of such indulgence was to make him wise in his own conceit. For this reason Mr. Gosse very strongly deprecated the practice of some librarians of issuing to the public statistics displaying the names of the authors most in demand and the books most often asked for at their particular library. This practice invariably revealed what it was better to conceal, the raw and unsettled taste of the majority of readers. There was nothing to be gained by being satirical at the expense of the half-educated, but equally little by drawing attention to facts which could not but be regretted. People, moreover, without judgment, who saw that some trashy writer was highly popular at one library, would be sure to want to know why, and in this way bad taste was disseminated. It was, surely, far best for librarians, while respecting the individuality of readers, tactfully and unobtrusively to lift the level of public opinion. In making these and other suggestions, he was merely setting a spark or two moving. If they approved of them they would blow them to a flame in their own useful experience. (Cheers.)

Discussion.

Mr. Baker (Woolwich) expressed his gratitude at being privileged to listen to the charming and stimulating address. There was not much to discuss, but Mr. Gosse had given them some wise counsel and encouragement. He particularly liked the note of optimism which characterised the address.

Mr. Jast (Croydon) has listened with enormous interest to Mr. Gosse's address. He had brought a wholesome breath of humour where it was very much required. A chief librarian was a very serious personage, but he was frivolous compared to the library assistant. After all, it was only a sense of humour which gave any idea of the perspective of things. Unlike Mr. Baker, he considered that the address to which they had listened contained a large number of points on which a discussion might

take place. The difficulty was to select the most important. He was interested in Mr. Gosse's reminiscences of Sir Antonio Panizzi. He had given a side of which the world knew nothing at all. He quite agreed with the reference to our over-emphasis of the technique of librarianship, but although it was important that the librarian should be a man of literary tastes it was necessary to have a man of administrative ability at the head of affairs. The modern librarian had little time for study; he was chiefly concerned in pushing the resources of the library to the best advantage. The assistants, however, upon whom the work of utilising the contents of the books fell, must know something about the books. It was only by having a thoroughly qualified staff that the public library could fulfil its purpose.

Mr. Kettle (Guildhall Library) was also pleased to have heard the address. Mr. Gosse's reminiscences of his British Museum days, and of Sir Antonio Panizzi, were especially interesting. They were indebted to Mr. Gosse for a regular harvest of charming books. He knew no more delightful book than "Gossip in a Library." It was evident that although now in the "gilded chamber" Mr. Gosse was still keeping a finger upon the pulse of the library movement to-day.

Mr. Roberts (Brighton), who expressed his pleasure at being present, said it had been remarked that assistants took themselves too seriously, but in the programme for the ensuing Session there was at least one item which was not of a serious nature—he referred to the visit to Brighton on July 4th next. He thanked the Chairman for the very kind reference to his work as Hon. Sec. of the Education Committee of the Library Association, a work which he regretted he had been compelled to relinquish. During the last ten years he had made hundreds of friends among assistants in all parts of the country, and he appreciated very much his election to honorary membership of the L.A.A. He was glad to think that he left the work of the Education Committee "booming," and that the attendance at the classes had touched a record point. Nearly forty assistants had joined Mr. Brown's class in Library Economy this term. In conclusion he urged that the consideration which had always been extended to him should be extended to his successor, Mr. Baker.

Mr. Palmer (National Art Library, South Kensington) thought that Mr. Gosse had only quoted Leslie Stephen's opinion as a point for discussion. All books admitted into a library should be good, both as to paper and the leather employed in the binding.

Mr. Thorne (Chairman, L.A.A.) proposed a vote of thanks to Mr. Gosse for his inspiring address. They had been favoured with addresses from many prominent men of the day, but none had surpassed that of Mr. Gosse. They would value the remembrance of that evening, and he hoped that on another occasion Mr. Gosse might be prevailed upon to again pay them a visit.

Mr. Sayers (Hon. Sec., L.A.A.), in seconding, said it was a matter for congratulation that year by year such eminent men were willing to come forward to give them the inspiration they needed. Assistants had been accused of taking themselves too seriously, but he did not think it was a bad fault to be serious in the pursuit of their profession. Moreover, the L.A.A. was primarily an educational association, and existed for the technique of the profession. He hoped that next year some discussions on literary topics might be introduced into the programme; he recognised clearly that the study of literature lay at the base of the profession, but the technique of the profession must come first.

Mr. Gosse in acknowledging the vote of thanks said he was very grateful for the kind manner in which they had received him. He had enjoyed the evening with them most thoroughly, and if he had succeeded in interesting them he was amply repaid.

Mr. Chambers (Plumstead) moved a vote of thanks to Mr. Wyndham

Hulme for presiding. His work on behalf of assistants was well-known. They all owed—and the cause of education owed—a debt of gratitude to him.

Mr. Young (Greenwich) seconded, and Mr. Wyndham Hulme briefly returned thanks.

The meeting then terminated.

PUBLISHERS AND PUBLIC LIBRARIES: A COMMENT ON THE "BOOK WAR."

The controversy which the evening papers describe in sensational type as the Book War is of the utmost importance to Libraries. The question at issue is not merely whether or not "The Times" Book Club shall be permitted to supply new books at a relatively high discount when they are about a month old, but whether or not publishers shall be allowed to combine and place what price they please upon books.

There are two sides to the controversy, and both have exploited evidence with great ability. Everyone who has watched the book-market for any length of time, must have noticed the abnormal increase of the "net" book system. For example, a prominent librarian pointed out recently that a new book on ventilation, of fairly wide appeal, consisting of barely 200 pages, was charged for at the exorbitant rate of 18s. net. It is scarcely necessary to pursue the obvious, but ephemeral (but perhaps necessary) biographies are docketed two guineas net, and many a book the intrinsic value of which is five shillings is offered at one guinea.

What is the position of affairs? A year ago "The Times" Book Club entered into an arrangement with publishers to secure books at a certain discount. These books "The Times" circulated in the form of a complimentary library to readers of the newspaper. It also undertook the sale of new books at the ordinary trade discount of 25 per cent. on non-net books; net books were of course of the published price. It had further arrangements for the sale of books which had circulated for one, three and six months, the discounts being, on one month 35 per cent non-net and 20 per cent. net books; three months 50 per cent. non-net, 33½ per cent. net; six months 70 per cent. non-net, 50 per cent. net. It is to this sale of books that the publishers and booksellers as one man object. The attitude is not difficult to understand from a business standpoint, seeing that "The Times" with its extensive buying powers has been able to secure better terms than other firms, and can make better terms with its public; but it is not very logical. Let us put it into logical order.

Libraries of the Mudie type might secure books and circulate them.

There was no time nor price specified at which books might be sold after being circulated.

Therefore they sold them at secondhand when they thought fit at what prices they pleased.

But, say the publishers,

"The Times" Book Club secured books and circulated them.

They sold them at secondhand rates after one month's circulation.

Therefore they must not be allowed to sell them secondhand when they think fit nor at what prices they please.

We will not comment on these rough syllogisms; but we may express our conviction that the decision of the publishers to permit only 25 per cent. discount on books to all comers (including public libraries) is arbitrary, artificial, and as it is opposed to all laws of the economy of competition, must in the end fail.

The recent decision of the Publishers' Association has totally ignored the right of public libraries to consideration. The public library, with its constant and sure custom, buying thousands of volumes, all of which are carefully particularised and so cause booksellers less trouble than any orders they receive, is to receive no more consideration than the ordinary

man in the street, who possibly buys one volume a year and then causes the bookseller a large amount of trouble by giving indefinite particulars. A year or two ago the Library Association approached the Publishers' Association with a view to discussing the net price problem; the result was a refusal of the Publishers' Association to open the question. Therefore if libraries would help themselves and reduce these exorbitant demands, they must take one of two alternatives.

The first would be the establishment of a central bookbuying bureau which should exclusively supply libraries, and demand special terms from publishers. The lever to use against the unreasonable publisher would be the threat to undertake actual publishing if necessary. As such a bureau would promote literature and not profit, it would be able to make better terms with authors than any present publisher, and so all the literature required would be forthcoming. It is to be remembered that the public libraries alone represent a book-buying power of £70,000 a year, and of probably much more than this sum. Let the publishers and booksellers see that all this money is going out of their hands, and they will gladly capitulate.

The second is that public libraries shall support "The Times" Book Club. At the moment "The Times" is fighting the cause of the libraries, and if all library authorities determine for about six months to buy all their net books from "The Times" the publishers and booksellers must lose the day. Any iron-bound restrictions placed around the sale of books are injurious to the reading public and the libraries they support.

The libraries will feel it first in their fiction buying. Hitherto we have been receiving discounts ranging from 40 per cent. to 30 per cent.; now we are to receive only 25 per cent. Hence we pay 4s. 6d. for a book for which we paid only 3s. 10d. or 4s. before. This is a tremendous reduction of our book-money, and one that must be resisted. As 6s. novels are sold to the trade at 3s. 4d. each, it will be seen that the bookseller receives 1s. 2d. profit on every novel he sells; obviously too high a profit. The novel costs less than 1s. to produce, the author possibly receives 10 per cent. on sales, or not quite 6d. per copy, and the balance, 1s. 10d., goes in the publisher's pocket. These facts will be interesting to those who think or imagine that authors—who naturally should be the first people to be considered in relation to books—are sufferers by "The Times" Book Club methods. The fixing of discount at 25 per cent. only increases the profits of the middlemen, the booksellers and publishers. All the talk about literature and the rights of authors by the publishers is so much twaddle written to deceive a sympathetic and ignorant public. The publishers as a body care nothing for the art side of literature; books are wares simply for the production of dividends. It only needs a reference to the padded biographies they produce—at an initial cost of 2s. 10d. per copy—and sell at £2 2s. net to prove this point.

The action of the publishers and booksellers has been ungenerous and unbusinesslike in the extreme. Year by year scores of books are produced which, as the publisher well knows, could not come into being if it were not for the certain support of the public libraries. Yet these libraries, which are their main support, and to which they owe a very large part of their other support, because public libraries have extended the general reading taste enormously, are to be absolutely ignored and to receive the same consideration as the single buyer.

It is probable that "The Times" Book Club will win in the end. It would certainly do so if all libraries supported it. Moreover, to hark back to our previous point, the arbitrary fixing of the sale price by the publishers is a violation of a well-known economic law, and though it may succeed for a while, it is foredoomed to failure.

W. C. BERWICK SAYERS.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED.

Port Elizabeth Public Library: Catalogue of the Reference and Lending Departments. Compiled by Percy Evans Lewin. 1906.

This catalogue is divided into two volumes: the first contains a combined author-subject list of non-fictional works, and an author list of novels; the second contains an author list of books in foreign languages, a subject list (with author index) of books on Africa, and an author list of the John Owen Smith collection of general literature. The books are arranged on the Dewey system, and the classification number is given in addition to the call number. Few annotations have been attempted, otherwise the catalogue is a good one of its kind, and we congratulate our old friend Mr. Lewin upon its completion.

Library Association: Class List of Best Books, 1905-1906. London: Library Supply Co. Price 1s. net.

This invaluable list of the best books of the year, compiled by experts of the Library Association, will undoubtedly have an extended usefulness in its new form. The list is classified (Dewey), and a subject index is added. The contributors are:—Bibliography and Library Economy, Bernard Kettle (Guildhall Library); Philosophy and Religion, C. H. Limbrick (Sub-Librarian, Sion College); Sociology, J. McKillop and Isabel Taylor (London School of Economics); Philology, J. L. Dougan, B.A. (Librarian, Oxford); Science, L. W. Fulcher, B.Sc. (Science Library, South Kensington Museum); Useful Arts, H. V. Hopwood (Patent Office Library); Fine Arts, G. H. Palmer, B.A. (National Art Library, South Kensington Museum); Literature, E. A. Baker, M.A. (Librarian, Woolwich); Juvenile Literature, the Staff of the Croydon Public Libraries; History, W. E. Doubleday (Librarian, Hampstead); Travel, J. R. Boosé (Librarian, Royal Colonial Institute); Biography, H. R. Tedder, F.S.A. (Librarian, The Athenæum).

RETIREMENT OF MR. CHARLES WELCH,
CITY LIBRARIAN.

On account of ill-health the Guildhall Librarian, Mr. Charles Welch, F.S.A., has retired from his position following an absence of three months. Mr. Welch has held for the past 18 years the office he vacates, but his total length of service extends over a period of 43 years in all. He has witnessed the building up of the Library during practically the whole period it has been open under existing conditions, and has been responsible in no small degree for the numerous improvements which have been introduced from time to time with a view to increasing the facilities offered to readers. He is the author of a number of books on London, including in particular, "The Modern History of London" and "The Tower Bridge," and in addition, of late years has been known as a lecturer, his principal address being on the City Guilds. Mr. Welch is a Fellow of the Library Association and an Honorary Member of the Library Assistants' Association, in which bodies he has always taken a keen interest. In his retirement he will bear with him the good wishes of his numerous friends in the profession, among whom are many assistants who have happy memories of some most enjoyable meetings at the Guildhall Library.

Mr. Edward M. Borrajo, senior Sub-Librarian, has been appointed Librarian pro tem.

PRESENTATION.

Mr. George A. Stephen, a member of the L.A.A., who was recently appointed Chief Assistant at the St. Pancras Public Libraries, has been the recipient of a handsome mahogany timepiece, suitably inscribed, from the Governors of the Bishopsgate Institute, in recognition of his "twelve years' faithful service." Mr. Stephen was also presented with several works on library economy by the Institute staff.

THE COMMITTEE.

A meeting of the Committee was held at the Bishopsgate Institute, on Wednesday evening, October 24th. Mr. W. Benson Thorne presided, and there were also present: Messrs. Bullen, Bursill, Chambers, Coutts, Hawkins, Hogg, Peplow, Poulter, Rees, Roebuck, Sayers (Hon. Secretary), Smith, Stephen, Sureties, Young, and the junior members, Messrs. Bayley, Bell, and Cornwall. A letter from Dr. Edmund Gosse was read in which he thanked the L.A.A. for the cordial reception accorded to him at the Inaugural Meeting; the following letter was also read:—

THE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION.

Whitcomb House, Whitcomb Street,
Pall Mall East, S.W.

18th October, 1906.

W. C. Berwick Sayers, Esq.,

Hon. Secretary, Library Assistants' Association.

In reply to yours of 20th August, 1906.

Dear Mr. Sayers,

Your letter conveying the resolution of your Committee re the Examination scheme has been submitted to my Council, and I am directed to say in reply thereto, that it is not their present intention to make any such changes in the scheme as would disqualify persons possessing one or more certificates from completing the series and obtaining the Diploma.

Very faithfully yours,

L. STANLEY JAST,

Hon. Secretary.

The question of the proposed "Register of Library Assistants" was again brought up, and after much discussion a vote was taken as to whether the "Register" scheme be proceeded with or not; and it was negatived by one vote (8 for, 7 against). Mr. Bell has been appointed Chairman pro tem. of the Junior Sub-Committee. Mr. Sayers moved that the Junior Sub-Committee be increased by two—the limit. After discussion it was decided to increase the number. Messrs. Kirby (Hornsey) and Preece (St. Pancras) were elected. The Hon. Secretary submitted a scheme for the increase of members, which was subjected to amendment and adopted.

Thirty-seven new members were elected, and other routine business transacted.

The next meeting will be held on November 21st.

CORRESPONDENCE.

To the Editor of "The Library Assistant."

The Study of Classification.

Sir,—With some slight surprise I read the communication of "Biblion," Glasgow, who seems to regard a correspondence class as the one and only means whereby the provincial assistant will ever attain sufficient knowledge of classification to enable him to enter for the L.A. examination with a reasonable hope of success. He also appears to be of the opinion that after such a class has been conducted, its students will revolutionise the old "over, twoery, tennery" methods of the non-classified libraries of the country. I'm afraid we shall require to consult the "chiefs" before the revolution is accomplished.

To a man belonging to a library or town where systematic classification is not in use, the correspondence class no doubt would be most useful to direct him to the right path of study. While recognising the great value of a correspondence class, I cannot regard it as indispensable, as the way has been so clearly mapped out in Mr. Brown's "Annotated Syllabus" that the industrious student requires no further guide.

My surprise arose from "Biblion" finding it essential to have the assistance of a correspondence class. He belongs to a town where the greatest scheme of library organisation in the kingdom is being proceeded with. Glasgow has at present ten district libraries with stocks of from 10,000 to 13,000 volumes each, classified on the Dewey decimal system; six other libraries with a similar number of volumes each are in course of organisation. A principle of differentiation of stock has been observed throughout the entire sixteen libraries, and the work of applying the Dewey notation to this enormous stock has necessarily made the men engaged on that interesting duty more or less expert in the practical application of the Dewey system; so that everything relating to the application of this system can be "Biblion's" for the asking. For the theory of classification the "Annotated Syllabus" points to all sources of information. It is worth noting that up to the last examination the Dewey system was the only one which candidates were asked to apply personally, and that with the aid of the printed tables.

A little study of the pass lists of the last two examinations will show any assistant that the provincial man by private study did equally as well as his metropolitan brother who has all the advantages of the London School of Economics classes and personal tuition. "Biblion" should take encouragement from the fact that at the last examination a Glasgow colleague by private study passed with honours in both classification and cataloguing.

If I might venture some advice gained from personal experience, I would recommend the student to take the "Annotated Syllabus" as his guide; for the theory of classification, scientific and book, to study Richardson's Classification; Mr. Jast's lucid and masterly article on Library Classification in Greenwood's Year Book, 1900-01, is almost invaluable, as an introduction to both the theory and the practical application of book classification; Brown's Manual of Classification gives all that is necessary for the historical survey of the subject, and outlines of the various systems. The introductions to the Decimal, Expansive and Subject Classifications must be carefully studied, and the notations of these systems practically applied, on the lines laid down by their authors in the introductions, to as many books as possible, in particular to those which present any special or seeming difficulty.

The introduction to Mr. Brown's new Subject Classification is practically a manual of the science of book classification, and places the present student in possession of knowledge which was not accessible formerly.

After six months of conscientious daily study, the student may approach the dreaded examination with high hopes of passing with merit, if not with honour.

A. S.

Glasgow.

L.A.A. LIBRARY.

The Librarian is anxious to complete the sets of publications in the Library of the Association, and will be glad to receive, as donations, any of the undermentioned volumes or parts. Offers to bind these, and other sets, will also be thankfully received.

Croydon Public Libraries Reader's Index:

Nos. 1—2 of Vol. 1. Jan. and Apr., 1899.

The Library (new series):—

Nos. 13, 14, 16 of Vol. 4. Jan., Apr., Oct., 1903.

Nos. 17, 20 of Vol. 5. Jan., Oct., 1904.

Nos. 21, 22, 23 of Vol. 6. Jan., Apr., July, 1905.

The Library, Vols. 6 to 10 (1894—1898) also wanted.

Please address: Mr. A. H. Carter, Public Library, St. Martin's Lane, W.C.

NEW MEMBERS.

Senior: Miss L. Fairweather, Islington; Messrs. E. F. Bew, Lewisham; S. Bryant, York; M. Clark, Hornsey; J. C. Darby, Bishopsgate Institute, London; S. Gibson, M.A., Bodleian Library, Oxford; T. W. Huck, Darlington; F. J. Knight, Lewisham; H. R. Purnell, Croydon.

Junior: C. H. Bird, Plumstead; H. Bower, Poplar; Miss O. E. Clarke, A.A.(Oxon.), Islington; W. B. Cooley, South Norwood, Croydon; H. G. Darnell, Greenwich; C. E. Dixon, Croydon; H. Drury, Harlesden; Miss R. Dumenil, Islington; Miss H. A. Funnell, Islington; Miss E. Glenister, Islington; F. M. Glenn, Harlesden; L. Godward, Hornsey; A. C. Green, Poplar; Miss M. E. Griffiths, Islington; H. F. Hawkeswood, Thornton Heath, Croydon; W. E. Haynes, Lewisham; L. D. Jenkins, Poplar; Miss C. Mitchell, Islington; Miss W. Molland, Islington; H. J. Norman, Lewisham; J. F. Preece, St. Pancras; Miss G. O. Skuse, Islington; E. T. Slight, Lewisham; Miss W. E. Stevenson, Islington; Miss E. M. Stokes, Islington; Miss E. Whiteside, Islington; A. R. Williamson, Lewisham; R. Wright, Croydon.

APPOINTMENTS.

LILLIE, Mr. ROBERT, Assistant, Middlesbrough, to be Assistant Librarian, Great Western Institute, Swindon.

*MCGILL, Mr. W., Mitchell Library, Glasgow, has been appointed to a position on the staff of the Islington Public Libraries.

GREEN, Mr. EDWARD, Librarian, Akroyd Park Branch, Halifax, to be Chief Librarian for the Borough, in succession to Mr. J. Whiteley.

*ELLISON, Mr. J. B., Assistant Librarian, Leeds Institute, to be Cataloguing Assistant, Leeds Public Libraries.

*FAIRWEATHER, Miss L., Assistant, Kingston-on-Thames, to be a Senior Assistant, Islington.

SMITH, Mr. H. H., Assistant, Wigan, to be Librarian, Hindley.

*MACKENZIE, Mr. W. M., Sub-Librarian, Aberdeen, to be Chief Librarian, Dunfermline.

[The other selected candidates for this appointment were Messrs. J. L. Dougan (Oxford), W. Law (Brighton) and E. McKnight (Chorley).]

* Member of the L.A.A.

ADDRESSES.

Chairman—Mr. W. Benson Thorne, Bromley Library, Poplar, E.

Hon. Treasurer—Mr. W. Geo. Chambers, Public Library, Plumstead (Telephone—45 Woolwich).

Hon. Secretary—Mr. W. C. Berwick Sayers, Central Library, Croydon (Telephone—394 Croydon).

Hon. Editor—Mr. Hugh Smith, Bishopsgate Institute, E.C., to whom matter for the December number should be sent not later than November 21st.